

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY East Germany

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SUBJECT Lifting of Berlin Border Controls

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1. Various hypotheses are suggested to explain the lifting of sector border controls in Berlin, which was announced at noon on 8 July 1953. The action may be a stage in a Communist plan to establish sufficient grounds for the permanent sealing-off of East Berlin from the western sectors. According to this theory, the Communists anticipate further outbreaks within the next few days, and have opened the border so that they will now be in a position to blame Western agents for whatever happens and to use this as a pretext for sealing the border again and keeping it sealed permanently.
2. The action may represent an attempt to offset the unfavorable reaction to the harsh measures used during the uprisings. In this case the Russians would hope to upset the Western alliance and gain a better position for a four-power conference.
3. The action may at the same time be an attempt to increase the popularity of the SED. Following the opening of the borders, either a harsh or a mild line can be adopted, depending on the reaction of the population: the Communists can return to the status of 1 June 1953 (before the announcement of several relaxations in the treatment of the Russian zone) or of 11 June (after the new policy was announced).

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